On 18 July 1290 every professing Jew in England was ordered out of the Realm, for ever, by King Edward I. Between sixteen and seventeen thousand Jews had to flee, and none dared return until four hundred years later

The Edict of Expulsion of 1290

A catalogue of recorded history surrounding Jewry under Angevin Kings of England, leading up to the Edict of Expulsion by King Edward I

Geoffrey H. Smith and Arnold S. Leese

1

The Settlement of Jews in England

Geoffrey H. Smith

There is little evidence to suggest that Jews settled in England in any large numbers until after the Norman Conquest. It was in Normandy, at Rouen, that a large Jewish community had existed since the Gallo-Roman era (see *Gesta Regum Anglorum* ii, 371n). William of Malmesbury stated that the Conqueror brought the Jews of London from Rouen. Thus it was armed might, not democracy, which led to England being occupied by Jews.

However, Jews soon became indebted to the Norman Exchequer. An example of Jewish indebtedness is that King Richard I (who reigned 1189-1199) instructed Isaac, son of a rabbi, to pay 1,000 marks to Henry de Gray, keeper of the Jews in Normandy. (For references to Henry de Gray see Morant, *History of Essex* i. 95 and Landon, *Itinerary of Richard I* no. 451.)

The first Jews to settle in England, then, were undoubtedly Jews from Normandy and in England they multiplied their number and their coins, until their expulsion in 1290.

The Jews of England flourished, travelled many miles around Europe and profited through their usurious proclivities and mercantile pursuits. They lived lavishly, owned great mansions and bought up English land when the English failed to meet their loans. (For proof of the wealth of Jews in England, see *Pipe Roll 3, Richard I*, Magister puerorum Ysaac (teacher of boys Isaac) p. 32; Vivus scriptor Helye (living writer Helye) p. 61; Coc de domo Abraham (abode of Abraham), Josce de domo Samsonis (Samson's home), Mosse de eadem domo (Moses of the same home), Biket de domo (Biket's home) p. 140.)

"The ostentation which possession of great wealth enabled the Jews to display, and their unconcealed contempt for the practices of Christianity, made them an object of universal dislike; as usurers, moreover, they had gained a strangle-hold on the recently founded monastic houses whose splendid buildings they had financed, and on many of the smaller aristocratic families..." From Domesday Book to Magna Carta (1951), p. 353

During the 12th century, England was visited by Jews from Italy, Spain and Russia, as well as from French-speaking lands.

Jews in medieval England built 'the great Synagogue' just a short walk from the Tower of London. This was an error for which many Jews paid later, on their short walk to the Tower for their execution. The Synagogue was used not only for religious ceremony but also to 'invite' claims against Christian debtors, effecting a settlement of their debts. (See Rigg, *Select Pleas*, pp. 9, 12; *Cal. Plea Rolls, passim* and Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora* v. 398-9.)

Following the death of Henry I, who reigned 1100-1135, the situation surrounding Jewry in England dramatically changed to their advantage when Stephen was elected as King of England. Stephen was weak and most of his reign (1135-1154) was marked by civil war. Stephen's weakness included a fondness for Jews and they soon founded communities at Norwich, Cambridge and Oxford. After the death of his son in 1153 Stephen acknowledged Matilda's son (Henry II) as his heir to the throne.

During Henry II's reign (1154-1189) Jewish communities could be found at Lincoln, Northampton, Thetford and Bungay; also in Gloucestershire, Hampshire and Wiltshire. In 1159 King Henry II levied taxes of 200 marks on the Jews of London, Norwich (72½ marks), Lincoln (60), Cambridge and Hampshire (50), Thetford (45), Bungay and Northampton (22½), Oxford (20), Gloucestershire and Wiltshire (2). Gloucestershire and Wiltshire saw most of the fighting for accession to the throne. (See *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, pp. 150-3 and also the map, contained therein.)

During Stephen's reign, when the royal power waned, Jews had preferred to settle on lands within the jurisdiction of the great lords of the day and under their protection. Thus, the easy explanation during Henry II's reign of the presence of Jewish communities at Bungay and Thetford, two towns belonging to the Earl of Norfolk, Hugh Bigod.

Dramatically, in 1192, Isaac of Saint Edmund's was killed at Thetford during a rising to awareness of the Jews by the populace. The Pipe Rolls of Richard I contain many traces of massacres of Jews.

By the time of Henry III's reign (1216-1272) there were sizeable Jewish communities in Bristol, Cambridge, Canterbury, Colchester, Exeter, Gloucester, Hereford, Lincoln, London, Northampton, Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford, Stamford, Winchester, Worcester and York. (This is proved by *Transactions*, xi 99-111, Jewish Hist. Soc., which were lists of taxation of Jews.)

One of the richest Jews in England around 1255 was Abraham of Berkhamstead, presented that same year to the Earl by King Henry III. Abraham was a very active Jewish usurer who had debtors in half the counties of England, from Devon to Yorkshire. Orders were issued to the sheriffs that debtors pay up, within a month of Easter following, or else their chattels would be seized. (For Abraham of Berkhamstead, see *Richard of Cornwall*, pp. 69-70.)

After the massacre of Jews in 1264, "divers Jews, taking alarm at the troublous state of the realm, went overseas... to Normandy" (see *Select Pleas*, p. 75).

By 1276 there were only two Jews engaged in money-lending in the town of Exeter (see PRO E.101/249/31), their names are Auntera, widow of Samuel, the son of Moses, and Isaac, the son of Moses (apparently of the same family).

By 1290, a cataclysmic date for Jews, there was but one household, that of a Jewess named Comtesse, in the High Street of Exeter (see E.101/249/27 no. 32). In Ipswich Jewish households realised no more that £7 6s 8d. when sold (Pipe Roll 22, Edward I, E.372/139, membrane 3).

Under Edward I (reigned 1272-1307) we read of the expulsion of Jews from Winchelsea and Bridgenorth – "*in quam nullus Iudeus aliquibus temporibus habitare consueverit aut morari.*" (in that no-one lending a share or portion dwelling temporarily has been accustomed or hindered; see *Foedera* i.n. 503 and *Cal. Close Rolls*, 1272-1279, p. 130).

Whatever may have been the position in the 12th century, in the 13th permanent residence outside one of the larger towns mentioned above appears to have been illegal without the King's licence. The statutory provisions of 1239 and 1253 seem to have been no more than an affirmation of what was already the rule (*Liber de Antiquis Legibus* (Book of Old Law), Camden Soc., p. 237; *Close Rolls*, 1251-1253, p. 313). In 1237, for example, the Sheriff of Northamptonshire was instructed to see that no Jew resided outside the town of Northampton (see *Close Rolls*, 1234-

1237, p. 425). Unauthorized residence appears, moreover, to have been the reason why the Bailiff of Sittingbourne was instructed in 1231 to arrest Isaac the Jew with his chattels (*Close Rolls*, 1231-1234, p. 12), for in 1266 a licence was required for a Canterbury Jew to depart and reside in Sittingbourne (*Cal. Plea Rolls*, I, 134; for later cases see Rigg, *Select Pleas*, pp. 61, 82; *Cal. Plea Rolls*, ii. 163; iii. 5, 127).

How the authorized communities established themselves in the 12th century is uncertain: no charter is known which permits Jews to reside in the towns where there is later evidence for the existence of synagogues. If, at first, there was some tacit understanding that in certain royal boroughs they would be protected from the wrath of the peasants, later their right of residence appears to have been a matter of accepted custom: "*in quam nullus Iudeus aliquibus temporibus habitare consueverit aut morari.*" The important Latin words are *habitare* (dwell) and *morari* (hindered). What was at issue was not visits or temporary stays for the purpose of business, for it is evident that Jews travelled all over the country, as indeed their charter permitted them to do, but the establishment of a permanent community. Jews might indeed own property in towns in which they did not reside, as at Cambridge, whence they had been expelled in 1275. They had also been expelled from Bridgenorth at the insistence of the townspeople in 1274, but to that town the people complained shortly afterwards, "they still have their repair, three or four days in the week, because they own a house in the town." Even though they had been expelled from Bridgenorth they were still returning to lend money, although they were not allowed to stay there more than a few days at a time.

"All the world suffers from the usury of the Jews, their monopolies and deceit. They have brought many unfortunate peoples into a state of poverty, especially farmers, working-class people, and the very poor." Pope Clement VIII, 1592

The experience of the Jews at Norwich must have taught every Jew in England how necessary royal protection was, and how easily religious passions could be aroused, even among the highest clergy. For it was the Bishop of Norwich, William Turbe, who was most active in prosecuting the charge of ritual murder against the Jews of his city, up to the supreme tribunal, the court held before the King himself. (See Jessopp and James, *St. William of Norwich* pp. 92-93, 103-10.)

Although contemporary Jewish authors deny such things as ritual murder, some admit that there may have been some unpleasant Jews around at the time.

2

Jewish Ritual Murder in England Before 1290

Arnold S. Leese

The first known case occurred in 1144; after that, cases cropped up from time to time until the Jews were expelled from the realm by Edward I. The most famous of these incidents was that of Little St. Hugh of Lincoln in 1255. I record these cases in chronological order; and I do not deny the possibility that some of them, in which details are lacking, were "trumped up" ones, where death may have been due to causes other than ritual murder and the Jews blamed for it; but the case of St. Hugh, particularly, was juridically decided, and the Close and Patent Rolls of the Realm record definitely cases at London, Winchester and Oxford. There seems no reason to doubt that many cases of ritual murder have been unsuspected and even undiscovered.

1144, Norwich. A twelve year-old boy was crucified and his side pierced at the Jewish Passover. His body was found in a sack hidden in a tree. A converted Jew, called Theobald of Cambridge, confessed that the Jews took blood every year from a Christian child because they thought that only by so doing could they ever obtain their freedom and return to Palestine; and that it was their custom to draw lots to decide whence the blood was to be supplied; Theobald said

that last year the lot fell to Narbonne, but in this year to Norwich. The boy was locally beatified and has ever since been known as St. William. The Sheriff, probably bribed, refused to bring the Jews to trial.

In J. C. Cox's *Norfolk Churches*, vol. II, p. 47, as also in the *Victoria County History of Norfolk*, 1906, vol.. II, is an illustration of an old painted rood-screen depicting the ritual murder of St. William; the screen itself is in Loddon Church, Norfolk, unless the power of Jewish money has had it removed. No-one denies this case as a historical event, but the Jews of course say it was not a ritual murder. The Jew, C. Roth, in his *The Ritual Murder Libel and the Jew* (1935) says: "Modern enquirers, after careful examination of the facts, have concluded that the child probably lost consciousness in consequence of a cataleptic fit, and was buried prematurely by his relatives." How these modern enquirers arrived at a conclusion like that after all these years, Mr. Roth does not say; nor is it a compliment to the Church to suggest that its ministers would allow the boy's death to be celebrated as the martyrdom of a saint without having satisfied themselves that wounds on the body confirmed the crucifixion and piercing of the side. And why the relatives should bury the boy in a sack and then dig it up and hang it in a tree would puzzle even a Jew to explain.

John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the Church* records this ritual murder, as did the Ballandists and other historians. The Prior, William Turbe, who afterwards became Bishop of Norwich, was the leading light in insisting that the crime was one of Jewish ritual murder; in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (edited by a Jew!) it is made clear that his career, quite apart from this ritual murder case, is that of a man of great strength of character and moral courage.

1160, Gloucester. The body of a child named Harold was found in the river with the usual wounds of crucifixion. Sometimes wrongly dated 1168. (Recorded in *Monumenta Germania Historica*, vol. VI (Erfurt Annals); *Polychronicon*, R. Higdon; *Chronicles*, R. Grafton, p. 46.)

1181, Bury St. Edmunds. A child called Robert was sacrificed at Passover. The child was buried in the church and its presence there was supposed to cause miracles. (Authority: Rohrbacher, from the *Chronicle* of Gervase of Canterbury.)

1192, Winchester. A boy crucified. Mentioned in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* as being a false charge. Details lacking.

1232, Winchester. Boy crucified. Details lacking. (Mentioned in Hyamson's *History of the Jews in England*; also in *Annals of Winchester*; and conclusively in the Close Roll 16, Henry III, m.8, 26.6.1232.)

1235, Norwich. In this case, Jews stole a child and hid him with a view to crucifying him. Haydn's *Dictionary of Dates* of date 1847, says of this case, "They [the Jews] circumcise and attempt to crucify a child at Norwich; the offenders are condemned in a fine of 20,000 marks." (Further authority Huillard Breolles, *Grande Chronique*, III, 86; also Close Roll, 19 Henry III, m.23.)

1244, London. A child's body found unburied in the cemetery of St. Benedict, with ritual cuts. Buried with great pomp in St. Paul's. (Authority: *Social England*, vol. I, p. 407, edited by H. D. Traill.)

1255, Lincoln. A boy called Hugh was kidnapped by the Jews and crucified and tortured in hatred of Jesus Christ. The boy's mother found the body in a well on the premises of a Jew called Jopin or Copinus. This Jew, promised by the judge his life if he confessed, did so, and 91 Jews were arrested; eventually 18 were hanged for the crime. King Henry III himself personally ordered the juridical investigation of the case five weeks after the discovery of the body, and refused to allow mercy to be shown to the Jew Copinus, who was executed.

Hugh was locally beatified, and his tomb may still be seen in Lincoln Cathedral, but the Jewish Money Power has evidently been at work, for between 1910 and 1930 a notice was fixed above the shrine as follows: "The body of Hugh was given burial in the Cathedral and treated as that of a martyr. When the Minster was repaved, the skeleton of a small child was found beneath the present tombstone. There are many incidents in the story which tend to throw doubt upon it, and the existence of similar stories in England and elsewhere points to their origin in the fanatical hatred of the Jews of the Middle Ages and the common superstition, now wholly discredited, that ritual murder was a factor of Jewish Paschal Rites. Attempts were made as early as the 13th century by the Church to protect the Jews against the hatred of the populace and against this particular accusation."

At a visit to Lincoln of the Jewish Historical Society, in 1934, the Mayor, Mr. G. Deer, said to them: "That he [St. Hugh] was done to death by Jews for ritual purposes cannot be other than a libel based upon the prejudices and ignorance of an unenlightened age." The Chancellor on the same occasion said: "It was quite obviously one of the very many cases of slander spread about the Jews from time to time. No doubt, the child died or fell down the well."

These people, Jews and Gentiles, bring no evidence whatever for their statement; it couldn't have happened, they say. Why not?

Was Henry III, weak in character as we know him to have been, ever charged with being an immoral man? Did the judges not examine the body, which was only four weeks dead? Is Haydn's *Dictionary of Dates* (1847 edition) medieval and superstitious when it said of this case "They [the Jews] crucify a child at Lincoln, for which eighteen are hanged"? There are no 'ifs' and 'buts' here! Or does Copinus's confession not tally with that of Theobald, quoted above in the first Norwich case? Copinus said, "For the death of this child, nearly all the Jews in England had come together and every town had sent deputies to assist in the sacrifice."

No-one questions the historical facts in this case; but Jews and Judaized Gentiles alike unite in denying the fact of ritual murder.

Strack, in his *The Jew and Human Sacrifice*, written in defence of the Jews against the Blood Accusation, omits all mention of this famous case, which is the subject of the Prioress's Tale in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and is referred to in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*. Hyamson's *History of the Jews in England* devotes the whole of Chapter IX to "Little St. Hugh of Lincoln," showing the importance of the ritual murder issue in the Jewish mind today. (The following Close Rolls of the Realm refer to the case of St. Hugh: Henry III, 39, m.2, 7.10.1255; 39, m.2, 14.10.1255; 40, m.20, 24.11.1255; 40, m.13, 13.3.1256; 42, m.6, 19.6.1258. And the Patent Rolls, Henry III, 40, m.20, 26.11.1255; 40, m.19, 9.12.1255; 40, 27.3.1256; and 40, m.5, 20.8.1256.)

1257, London. A child sacrificed. (Authority: Cluverius, *Epitome Historiae* p. 541.) Details lacking.

1276, London. Boy crucified. (Authority: The Close Roll of the Realm, 4, Edward I, m.14, 3.3.1276.)

1279, Northampton. A child crucified. Haydn's *Dictionary of Dates*, 1847, says of this case: "They [the Jews] crucify a child at Northampton for which fifty are drawn at horses' tails and hanged." (Further authorities: Reiley, *Memorials of London*, p. 15; H. Desportes, *Le Mystére du Sang*.)

1290, Oxford. The Patent Roll 18 Edward I, m.21, 21st June 1290, contains an order for the gaol delivery of a Jew, Isaac de Pulet, detained for the murder of a Christian boy at Oxford.

Only one month after this, King Edward issued his decree expelling the Jews from the Kingdom. There is, then, every reason to believe that it was the Oxford murder which proved the last straw in toleration.

A similar ritual case was one of the main stimulants to the King and Queen of Spain to expel professing Jews from that country in 1492 (Leese: *Jewish Ritual Murder*, p. 20).

The Jews, in attempting to escape responsibility for these deaths by ritual murder, do not hesitate to impugn the probity of two of the Kings of England, against whose moral character no-one else has dared to cast a slur. Here are some examples. Firstly the Jew Hyamson (in *History of the Jews in England*, 1928 edition, p. 21) wrote: "It has also been pointed out that the Blood Accusation was as a rule made at a time at which the Royal Treasury needed replenishing." This foul accusation against men of upright character was repeated in the *Jewish Chronicle* Supplement, April 1936, p. 8 (speaking of the Lincoln case in the reign of Henry III): "Henceforth and especially under the zealously Christian Edward I, the Crown and its officers became almost a worse peril to the Jews than mobs intent on loot and led on by fanatic priests and knightly spendthrifts who had borrowed Jewish money. When 18th century writers of history began to examine the old records in a new sceptical temper some may be found venturing on such unkind surmises as that the alleged crucifixions of Christian children only seemed to happen when kings were short of money."

To deny that the cases of St. William of Norwich and St. Hugh of Lincoln were Jewish ritual murders is to accuse certain English Kings, certain English Clergy, and certain English administrators, known to be men of good morals, of murdering and torturing Jews to get their money, after accusing them of horrible crimes. In the case of St. Hugh, the sentence was juridical; in the case of St. William, the mob took the matter into their own hands because the Sheriff would take no action himself.

Whom do you believe – the Jews or the English?

"It is difficult to refuse all credit to stories so circumstantial and so frequent." So says *Social England* concerning ritual murders in England (vol. I, p. 407, 1893, edited by H. D. Traill).

A significant fact is that Haydn's *Dictionary of Dates*, at least up to 1847, quoted the ritual murders in Norman and Plantagenet England as undisputed facts. In later editions in the sixties, all mention of them is extirpated! We may take it that the Jewish Money Power began to dictate to the Press in England somewhere in the fifties of the last century.

3

The Expulsion of the Jews from England

Geoffrey H. Smith

Upon accession to the throne, Edward I was conducting a crusade against the Saracen. Returning to England in 1274, he found the realm in ruins, as a result of his father's folly.

Many debtors, realising that the Jews of England were in trouble, refused to honour their debts. An audit organised by the government revealed widespread corruption. Many formerly affluent Jewish financiers had to sell their property in order to fulfill their tax obligations. Many also failed to pay the taxes due and were simply banished, as Jews were only tolerated when they could devise means to legally rob the English so as to pay taxes to the Crown.

The generally run-down condition of Jewry cried out for reform, and events abroad indicated one method of bringing it about.

In 1274, when Edward returned from the crusades, the Council of Lyons under Pope Gregory X ordered the Christians to condemn the sin of usury and those who conducted it, both native-born and foreign. Pious Edward, being a loyal son of the Church, went into immediate action, and ordered an investigation into the practices of the Florentine bankers. They had been in England since 1223. There then followed an investigation of the Jews.

For nearly 200 years Jewish bankers had been favoured by the Crown and encouraged to fill the royal coffers – this cannot be denied. But now that Jews were impoverished, their 'usefulness' could be forgotten. And so Henry III's policy of restricting Jewish activities, and the Church's policy of suppressing usury, were combined in an attempt to prevent Jews from practising their expertise in loaning money at interest.

A foolish attempt was made to turn Jews from usurers and merchants to material producers and common labourers. This proposal – putting Jews to work – was submitted by Robert Grosseteste, later Bishop of Lincoln. He thought it a good idea and he approved it. See Grosseteste, *Epistolae*, ed. Luard, V. p. 3ff. (To this day, Jews in Israel refuse to sweep the streets and do menial work.)

Then later, Thomas Acquinas urged similar action upon the Duchess of Brabant. "If rulers think they harm their souls by taking money from usurers," he wrote, "they should see that the Jews are compelled to labour." (See *Opusculum ad Ducissam Brabantae*, 1261.)

The *Stätütüm dè Jûdèísmö* of 1275 was promulgated in the Common Council of the Realm at Westminster. Both Jews and Christians were forbidden to lend money at interest; offenders would suffer punishment. Debts outstanding at the time the Statute was introduced were to be paid by the following Easter.

> **And that each Jew after he shall be seven years old, shall wear a badge on his outer garment that is to say in the form of two tables joined of yellow fait of the length of six inches and of the breadth of three inches.**
>
> *Stätütüm dè Jûdèísmö* 1275

As regards the ownership of land, the *Stätütüm dè Jûdèísmö* was more liberal than the legislation of four years earlier, which prohibited it entirely except for personal occupation.

Following the promulgation of the Statute, Jewry held a meeting to consider the long-term impact. They drew up a long petition, begging the King and his Council to make modifications. Poor Jews (they claimed) should be allowed to dispose of property to fellow Jews, instead of being forced to tear down buildings for scrap material.

Jews could no longer travel about safely and usury was no longer profitable as debtors realised their increasing plight. Their petition to the King and Council was a pathetic plea for mercy, begging to be allowed to live at peace under Edward as they had done since the days of the Norman Conquest. (See *Select Cases in Court of King's Bench, Edward I*, vol. iii, pp. xxxi, cxiv.)

During the year following the enactment of the *Stätütüm dè Jûdèísmö*, many Jews unable to pay their taxes were imprisoned and their families deported overseas. Wealthy Jews, in contrast, turned to the sale of corn and wool. They proved successful at Bristol, Canterbury, Exeter and Hereford, trading in corn, while at Lincoln, Norwich and Oxford their interest was wool. Dealing in trinkets, jewelry and common junk continued as of old.

Many Jews, forbidden by the Statute to profit from usury took to 'clipping' the coinage: that is, clipping or filing the edges of gold and silver coins, putting it back into circulation and melting the clippings and filings into bullion.

This offence is condemned in *Sepher Hassidin* pp. 305-6 and is recorded as one of the reasons for the Expulsion by Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg, in his *Responsa*. (Also by the chroniclers Ibn Verga and Usque in their accounts of the Expulsion; and less sceptically, Isaac Abrabanel in his *Yeshwoth Meshiho*, p. 46.) Jews were punished more severely than Christians if clipped coins were found about their person.

Even Jewish historians admit that usury was their sole occupation at one time, but once that channel of livelihood had been forbidden, conditions worsened, dramatically and fatefully for Jews. Prosecutions increased until at last the King appointed a judicial commission to investigate.

On 17 November 1278 Jews all over England were arrested in house-to-house searches in every city that had Jewish quarters. Several hundred were sent to the Tower, their property confiscated and escheated to the King. Among the Jews arrested were Benedict fil' Licoricia, a prominent Jew of Winchester, and the affluent woman financier Belaset of Lincoln. The house confiscated from Belaset of Lincoln is still standing in Steep Hill. (For the official inventory of the property confiscated, extant only for Bristol, Devizes and Winchester, see *Misc. J.H.S.E.* ii, 56-71.)

A few Jews stayed alive by discovering the benefits of Christianity, and gave up Judaism. Only three Christians were hanged for clipping the coinage and melting it down into bullion.

Thus, the end came about to large-scale offences against the coin of the realm. The sale and export of bullion by Jews was prohibited (cf. P.R. 1283, pp. 56, 79; see also: *Annales Monastici* ii, 390-1; iii, 279; iv, 278).

In November 1286 Pope Honorius wrote to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, reaffirming the decision of the Lateran Councils. He enlarged on the evils of relations between Christians and Jews and warned of the pernicious consequences of the study of the Jews' *Talmud*. The King joined in the dialogue and condemnation by reviving the crimes of ritual murder. Jewish writers use the word "allegation" with regard to ritual murder with boring regularity.

On 6 February 1283 a Justice of the Jews, Hamo Hauteyn, set up a commission to investigate charges against Jews accused of selling plate made of clippings or silvered tinplate to foreign merchants. However, Justice Hauteyn was cashiered as he was far from genuine also. (See *Select Cases in Court of King's Bench, Edward I*.)

To coin a modern phrase, there was only one 'final solution' to the Jewish problem. But the banishment of Jews was by no means a new idea in the 13th century. It had been employed all over Europe as far back as the 7th century.

In England various parliaments attempted to interest the King to order the expulsion of all Jews and it seems to have crossed the mind of Henry III. The Jews averted immediate disaster by making a better offer.

The final step was taken on 18 July 1290 by an Act of the King in his Council. It happened to be (long since remembered with awe) the fast of the ninth of Ab, the anniversary of manifold disasters for Jews, from the destruction of Jerusalem onwards. On the same day writs were issued to the sheriffs of many English counties, informing them that by Royal Decree all Jews were ordered to leave England before 1 November; any who remained were declared liable to be executed. The news of the expulsion was greeted by the population with great joy. Parliament promptly agreed to royal demand for a fifteenth of moveables and a tenth of the spiritual revenue, in taxation against Jews.

The Jews of London started their long journey to the coast "under the custody of the Lord King," bearing the Scrolls of the Law, "*una cum libris suis*" (at one with their book). On board ship, at Queenborough, at the mouth of the Thames, ship's anchor was cast at ebb-tide and the ship grounded on a sandbank. The ship's Master then invited his

passengers to stretch their legs. When the tide reversed direction so did the Master, climbing back on board while telling the helpless Jews that they "ought to cry unto Moses, by whose conduct their fathers passed through the Red Sea." The Jews all drowned but the Master also met a bad end. He was hanged when the pious Edward learned of his mockery and manslaughter.

Most of the Jews went from England to France, while others wandered to Spain, Germany and Flanders. That fateful year for Jews, 1290, saw the first general expulsion from any country of that era. As chronicled in recorded history, Edward I was the first to order wholesale banishment of the Jews, with such awesome and long-lasting effect. His example was followed sixteen years later in France, by Philip de Bel, and two centuries later by Ferdinand and Isobel of Spain.

> **"Although Edward I's 1290 edict of expulsion was not formally revoked as Manasseh [Ben Israel] had hoped, the resumption of open Jewish worship achieved the same practical result. The edict has actually not been revoked to this day."** Joan Comay: *Who's Who in Jewish History after the Period of the Old Testament* (1974).

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